United Nations S/2016/503

Security Council

Distr.: General
1 June 2016
English
Original: French

Letter dated 27 May 2016 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that at 10 a.m. on 10 June 2016, the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations will hold a high-level open debate, within the framework of the French Presidency of the Security Council, on the theme of "Protecting civilians in the context of peacekeeping operations". The concept note for this event is attached to the present letter (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as documents of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) François **Delattre**

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Annex to the letter dated 27 May 2016 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and French]

Concept note

French presidency of the Security Council — June 2016

High-level open debate on protecting civilians in the context of peacekeeping operations (New York, 10 June 2016)

The protection of civilians in armed conflict — which consists of promoting all activities that seek to ensure full compliance with international humanitarian law, international human rights law, refugee law and the existing legal frameworks in this field — is a major issue, as civilians remain the target of unacceptable violence in situations of armed conflict.

Although the protection of civilians is primarily the responsibility of States, the United Nations also has an essential part to play, through peacekeeping operations in particular. Since the late 1990s, the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretariat have therefore worked hard to develop institutional and operational tools to strengthen United Nations action in this regard, as illustrated by Security Council resolutions 1265 (1999), 1674 (2006) and 1894 (2009), the report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2010/579), submitted in November 2010, and the recent progress made in the mandates and resources of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.

In light of the publication in 2015 of the Ramos-Horta report (A/70/95-S/2015/446) and the Rosenthal report (A/69/968-S/2015/490), the fifteen-year anniversary of the "Women, peace and security" agenda and the ten-year anniversary of the first resolutions on the protection of children in armed conflict, and in view of persistent abuses against civilians in armed conflict zones where peacekeeping missions are or could be deployed, 2016 must be an opportunity for Member States to evaluate United Nations action on the contribution of peacekeeping operations to the protection of civilians and identify ways forward to improve it.

Driven by its constant and operational commitment to effective peacekeeping and to the universal promotion of human rights and international humanitarian law, France will organize a high-level open debate on these topics during its presidency of the Security Council in June 2016. This debate will follow on from the high-level thematic debate of the General Assembly on peacekeeping on 10 and 11 May, the first World Humanitarian Summit, which will be held in Istanbul, Turkey, on 23 and 24 May on the initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General, and the commemorations for the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers on 29 May.

Although considerable progress has been made in this field over the last twenty years (a focus on women, peace and security and children and armed conflict, in particular), this debate will contribute to the movement towards reform

which began last year. The aim is to invite Member States to participate, if they wish, in the general discussion on the role of peacekeeping in the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

The debate will be an opportunity for participants to discuss the following issues in particular:

(a) **Effectiveness of peacekeeping operations charged with protecting civilians.** On the basis of the experience gained during peacekeeping operations with a mandate to protect civilians, what is the best approach when implementing mandates?

(b) **Relations with local actors and non-governmental organizations on the one hand, and regional and international organizations on the other hand.** How can we encourage all relevant regional and international organizations to take protection of civilians into account? At a local level, how can we support the development of capacities that contribute to the protection of civilians? How can we strengthen the partnership with international and local humanitarian actors?

(c) **Approach to the protection of civilians in Security Council resolutions.** Are mandates clear enough with regard to the protection of civilians? What means do we have of tracking the implementation and achievement of targets set by the Security Council? Should mandates be reviewed regularly?

(d) **Training, capacities and responsibility of troops. How should the protection of civilians feature in the initial training of the contingents deployed?** To what extent should the operational capacities devoted to the protection of civilians be adapted?

This ministerial-level meeting will be chaired by French Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development Jean-Marc Ayrault. It will take place in the Security Council at United Nations Headquarters on 10 June, at 10 am, and will be open to all Member States.

This meeting will be held in the presence of the main organizations and actors concerned. A prominent civil society representative will present the challenges that remain in terms of protecting civilians and give concrete examples of protection of civilians by peacekeeping operations on the ground.

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